



HOWARD FISCHER Capitol Media Services | Posted: Tuesday, February 23, 2010 5:00 am | [\(0\) Comments](#)

A voter-approved measure to fund early childhood development programs is safe from legislative raiding, at least for the time being.

On a 4-4 vote the House Education Committee on Monday killed HCR 2050 which would have asked voters to expand the First Things First program to fund programs through third grade. The law originally approved by voters in 2006 now deals only with those youngsters through age 5.

Rep. Rich Crandall, R-Mesa, noted the program is financed with funds from an 80-cent-a-pack tax on cigarettes. He said that, given the state's budget situation, it makes sense to spread those dollars around.

But Steve Lynn, chairman of the program, said that would dilute the work being done for the younger children to help ensure they are ready to learn by the time they enter school.

Monday's action may not be the last word: Lawmakers seeking to balance the state budget continue to eye the cash from various voter-approved programs.

GOVERNOR QUESTIONS

The Senate Judiciary Committee voted 4-3 Monday to let lawmakers demand that the governor answer questions put to them, live, at least twice a month.

SCR 1012 is modeled after "question time" that now exists in the British Parliament. Sen. Jonathan Paton, R-Tucson, said he thinks the public exchange of ideas makes sense -- and would prove educational to voters.

"The people need to see what happens in this place, both good and bad," he said.

Sen. Ken Chevront, D-Phoenix, one of the opponents, said there is nothing that precludes lawmakers from inviting the governor now. The measure, which eventually would require voter approval, now goes to the full Senate.

Light bulbs

Ignoring U.S. Supreme Court rulings, the House Rules Committee on Monday decided that it is constitutional for Arizona to allow the manufacture of incandescent light bulbs after they are effectively banned by federal law.

Rep. Frank Antenori, R-Tucson, acknowledged Congress can regulate interstate commerce. And new efficiency standards set to take effect in 2014 likely will force consumers to use either compact fluorescent or bulbs with light emitting diodes.

But he said that does not preclude Arizona from deciding on its own to allow them to be made in this state as long as they are sold here.

Staff attorney Don Jansen told lawmakers that the most recent rulings of the nation's high court give Congress broad authority to decide what is interstate commerce. And he questioned whether this proposal would withstand federal challenge.

But the panel voted 5-3 anyway to declare it legally sufficient to send it to the full House for a vote.

Corporation spending

Without dissent, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted Monday to require public disclosure of funds spent by corporations and unions to get candidates elected or defeated.

SB 1444 follows last month's ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court voiding federal laws that keep both groups from running their own independent campaigns to influence elections. That move effectively overturned similar Arizona laws.

Secretary of State Ken Bennett said this bill is designed to ensure that the public knows who is spending money and which races they hope to affect. The high court decision still permits states and the federal government to impose reporting requirements.

The bill now goes to the Senate.

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